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Annual ministerial review: implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to gender equality and empowerment of women

Statement submitted by Forum of Women's NGOs of Kyrgyzstan, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/2010/100.

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Statement

Women's empowerment is a key to successful development

Recognizing the positive steps of States towards implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, the Beijing Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in the Central Asian region, the Forum of Women's NGOs of Kyrgyzstan and the Feminist League are expressing concern about the continuing challenges faced by poor and marginalized women in the region. Women don't need only political declarations; women need adequate mechanisms, equal opportunities, adequate resources and concrete action.

We express our deep concerns about the very negative impact on the lives of women of political turbulence, globalization and militarism, the global economic and financial crisis, growing religious fundamentalism and the strengthening of patriarchal attitudes towards women. We call for implementing commitment to reach women's empowerment.

Women's participation in political processes is crucial for reaching the Millennium Development Goals. Women continue to be dramatically underrepresented in decision-making positions in all five Central Asian republics. It is necessary to have a uniform State programme and an effective implementation and monitoring mechanism on women's political empowerment, to include women in decision-making bodies as heads of those bodies, to allocate finances in the State budget for those purposes and to overcome conservative and patriarchal attitudes towards women's effective and full political participation. Equal representation and participation of women and men in decision-making is one the fundamental steps for addressing social and economic issues in an integrated way. States should: (a) include women and women's organizations into development cooperation development actors; (b) adopt and implement temporary special measures to increase the level of women's representation in all decision-making positions; (c) start gender budgeting initiatives and allocate State budget finances for women's rights; (d) attract international financial support through inclusion of women's rights in a country's priorities list.

Women should be empowered to overcome the impact of the global crisis. Women suffer financial, economic and social impacts from the global economic crisis at the macroeconomic, microeconomic and personal levels. Women in Central Asia already have unequal access to economic and financial resources and decision-making; more then 85 per cent of the wealth in our countries is owned by men. Women entrepreneurs have fewer opportunities to get access to financial resources because real wealth is concentrated in men's hands. In rural Kyrgyzstan, only 12 per cent of farms are headed by women, while more then 90 per cent of the arable land, cattle, poultry, and agricultural and processing machinery is owned by men.

We call for special international, regional and national funds for supporting women's economic initiatives and for strengthening national institutional machineries and gender mainstreaming in all line ministries of the Governments. Women should be present at the table when solutions are being discussed to support economic growth rooted in gender equality and social justice.